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ABSTRACT

Factors reported to be important in the design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development programs for department chairs are described. Attention is also directed to results from a goal-focused evaluation of the 6-year-old program to train new department heads in the nine state universities of Florida, a program that is being adopted across the United States and Canada. The widespread recognition of a need to train chairs and some important characteristics of such programs are considered. In addition, the means by which institutional administrators can assess the need for training are examined. Results are also provided of several training programs, which should complete the information institutional officials need to decide the kind of program they should underwrite for the professional development of department chairs. It is noted that an important way to determine the need for training before the situation becomes critical is to carefully examine the job and role characteristics of all chairs in an institution. Several kinds of surveys that have been used to study department heads are discussed. Information from reports about training programs is presented concerning the participants, what is learned, experiences after the training program, and whether the programs are successful. (SW)

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DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS: CONSIDERATIONS AND OUTCOMES

John S. Waggaman

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Development Programs for Academic Administrators: Considerations and Outcomes

John S. Waggaman

This paper describes the factors reported to be important in the design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development programs for department chairs. The paper also considers some results from a goal-focused evaluation of the six-year-old program to train new department heads in the nine state universities of Florida, a program that is being adopted across the U.S. and Canada.

The first section discusses the widespread recognition of a need to train chairs and some important characteristics of such programs. The second section describes the means by which institutional administrators can assess the need for training, and the last section reports the results of several training programs, which should complete the information institutional officials need to decide the kind of program they should underwrite for the professional development of department chairs.

BACKGROUND

The importance of the position of department chair has been recognized for decades, but only in recent years has any serious response been made to the necessity for training them (Jennerich 1981).

If one organization had to be identified as significant in the furtherance of training for department chairs, it undoubtedly would be the Kellogg Foundation. In 1977, it funded the development of a model training program, preparation of materials for use by participants, and pilot testing of a model program in Florida. Later, the American Council on Education (ACE) was supported by Kellogg so that 12 state systems of higher education could implement the model training program; ACE also edited and published a volume of materials used in the workshops (Tucker 1981). The latest effort supported by Kellogg and its director expands the applicability of the training program to individual and systems of community colleges, an arrangement coordinated through the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. All of this activity indicates a clear interest in professional training of department heads.

The need to train department chairs arises from a variety of factors (Olswang and Cohen 1979). A high rate of turnover for chairs creates a distinctive need. Heimler (1967) suggested nine reasons for chairs resigning; they include the individuals' personal attitudes as well as problems with organizations and their policies. Chief academic officers often believe that many of these difficulties can be ameliorated through training. Providing training each year for the new group of department chairs is one way to help them become effective very quickly—even more necessary when a new chair comes from outside the institution and has to unlearn old policies and procedures and learn new ones. In some institutions, new administrators—and chairs thought to be candidates for higher administrative posts—have been trained.

The need for training also may arise when a college or university wants to enhance the general quality of administration (Scott 1978). Well trained department chairs can aid an institution as it confronts declining and changing enrollments, shrinking financial support, and changing priorities in the society at large. Affirmative action programs and the necessity to be familiar with procedures for collective bargaining and grievances have also underscored the need for training programs. Previous training programs focused on the improvement of faculty teaching and course materials. Programs for administrators were usually ad hoc or provided outside the organization, for example by the training institutes of ACE and other national associations.

National associations for the academic disciplines, of which English is a prime example (Booth 1982), have sponsored ongoing programs for department heads. New programs, like those sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, have focused on many of the details that are critical to the effective administration of a department. They are sponsored at the system level so that persons from different campuses can learn from one another, their experienced peers, and the experts.

The most recent description of training programs for department heads can be found in Booth (1982). The programs are grouped according to the extent to which

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development or intervention for change is identifiable—for example, those that help clarify roles, those that use peer learning and disciplinary training, and those that deal with basic problems (pp. 24-30). The Kellogg program contains 12 subject units: (1) responsibilities, roles, and powers of department chair; (2) types of departments, leadership styles, delegation, and committees; (3) faculty grievances and unions; (4) faculty evaluation; (5) performance counseling—dealing with unsatisfactory performance; (6) assigning and reporting faculty activities; (7) faculty development—encouraging professional growth; (8) departmental decision making and bringing about change; (9) dealing with conflict and maintaining faculty morale; (10) departmental accomplishments and aspirations—setting goals and developing action plans; (11) the budget cycle—preparing departmental budget requests and persuading the dean; and (12) managing departmental resources—time, people, and money.

The literature contains few details about the programs, however, and interested readers contact the authors cited for additional information.

Before committing themselves to the development or purchase of a program, administrators should examine local needs. Training programs receiving the greatest support have been those designed to meet individual desires for improvement rather than those directed toward institutional or organizational development (Scott 1978). Unfortunately, an institution or system without a strong sense of what is best for it is most likely to contribute to department heads' role ambiguities and role conflicts, two difficulties that underlie many of the problems faced by department heads.

DETERMINING THE NEED FOR TRAINING

An important way to determine the need for training before the situation becomes critical is to carefully examine the job and role characteristics of all chairs in an institution. This examination will reveal that numerous concepts of a chair's role exist. These differences can be found among chairs in the same discipline and among chairs within the same school, college, or university. Some other differences that give a particular cast to the role of chair are whether departments are large or small *and* whether they are located in urban, research-oriented, or older institutions (Waggaman 1982). Membership in a collective bargaining unit or designation of the chair as a professional administrator may also color the role (Ehrle and Earley 1977). The only differences between chairs in various disciplines has been found between *clusters* of chairs (a cluster being a group of related disciplines, for example, the life sciences). Differences in clusters are significant in the role that chairs played in faculty development activities (Creswell et al. 1979).

A detailed examination of the role of chair can begin with a specification of the ideal characteristics expected of the persons elected or appointed to the position so that it can be used in the specification of a set of desired characteristics or competencies that best fit the local situation. Strong character, an administrative frame of reference, administrative performance skills, ability in human relations counseling, and outstanding professional ability in an academic field are probably the most important traits of an ideal chair (Heimler 1967). A more functional inventory of the chair's role includes four required skills: planning; communicating, representing, negotiating, coordinating, and facilitating; problem solving; organizing and administering (Roach 1976). Even more detailed lists of functions are possible (see, for example, Hill and French 1967 and Hoyt and Spangler 1979). One study that asked chairs to rate a predefined list of skills and competencies needed in their job included a broad mixture of items, with character integrity ranking most important and fund raising ability last (14th) (Jennerich 1981). This study, according to the author, shows "unequivocally that there is a universal set of competencies that *all* chairpersons consider necessary for their jobs" (Jennerich 1981 p. 54). The concept of leadership is broader in Brown (1977), which emphasizes instruction and scholarship. Brown's humane view of academic administration illustrates the relationship between parts of the hierarchy above and below department chair.

Administrators who perceive an emerging need to train chairs should consider whether training is likely to solve any problems. For example, communications problems often have their roots in role conflict (Carroll 1976), and role conflict for chairs usually emanates from college deans, other chairs, university administrators, and faculty. Perhaps these other people need training as well if confused responsibilities are to be resolved.

The problem perceived to require some training for chairs can be clarified as various institutional records are explored to determine the extent and the kind of training that might be needed. For example, institutional self-studies, often completed in preparation for accreditation visits, and the subsequent accreditation reports often contain indications of needed training. An examination of the perennial problems coming before a faculty senate or the most frequent faculty grievances filed can also indicate such needs. Department (and school) program reviews and self-studies prepared for professional accreditation or long-range planning can also be helpful (Booth 1977). If academic programs are reviewed across several institutions, the comparative results may be very informative. A thorough program review will reveal much about the administration, governance, and productivity of a department and the success of its head. (A program and its head are often perceived as one and the same (Hengstler et al. 1981).)

Surveys of department chairs, before training begins are also possible; this pretest should be considered a diagnostic evaluation. The test can ask for opinions about a need for training (Jennerich 1981) and can ask for answers to questions that would test a person's knowledge of the functions, roles, and skills necessary to solve or ameliorate typical problems confronting a chair. The test should not be used in conjunction with or as a substitute for annual evaluations of chairs because training surveys of this kind need complete responses uncontaminated by the chairs' reactions that might be based on anxieties about job security.

Another kind of survey that has been used to study department heads relies upon faculty members to rate the effectiveness of their particular chairs. Faculty evaluate department heads on a one-dimensional factor, which may be a result of "both a generosity error and a halo effect" (Hengstler et al. p. 271). Some of the activities Hengstler et al. used to rate chairs, however, may have been too general to measure specific attributes.

In a similar approach, but without collecting new data, evaluation reports by a dean (of chairs) might be researched for any pattern of a need for training. Such reports would be especially valuable if performance had been evaluated. Evaluation is still subjective enough, however (Fisher 1978; Reid 1982), that it is less reliable or useful than other methods for determining a need for training.

Additional information and consultation about the assessment of needs can be obtained from experts on and off campus. The Higher Education Management Institute's *Program Handbook* (1978) contains a section on such assessment and con-

tracks for it and for complete training programs (Webster 1979). Certain individuals on campus could be helpful if surveys are to be used—institutional researchers, educational test and measurement specialists, business marketing professors, and survey researchers.

Once needs have been assessed and a desire for training confirmed, several issues must be decided. Should a prepackaged program be purchased or should local training be developed? Can a local training program be developed with several other institutions to spread the cost and to obtain the input of a heterogeneous mix of people? What materials should be used? Where are the best facilities and the best location for the sessions? How many local leaders and how many outside experts will be used? Should training sessions use a lecture or discussion format? The 13 issues reviewed in the conduct of the Kellogg Foundation workshops are discussed in Waggaman (1982, Section III). These points could be used as a guide to plan and develop other training programs. An excellent detailed discussion of all kinds of training programs for chairs can be found in Booth (1982). Experienced adult education faculty and training program designers on the staffs of professional development and continuing education offices can assist in designing a training program.

TRAINING PROGRAMS AND RESULTS

Very little is reported about the consequences of training programs for chairs, although this gap is partially remedied in Booth (1982). This section reviews the results of the few reports published about training programs. Four questions were asked in the review: Who partipates? What do they learn? What happens to participants after the training sessions? Were the programs successful? The answers should help create realistic expectations about training programs for chairs.

First, the participants. Volunteers appear to be the largest group. Some programs are designed to attract volunteers, for example by focusing on questions of leadership rather than on management procedures (Plough 1979). Nominees are another group; they might be recommended for training because they are new or because they need training in a specific skill. Older chairs are sometimes recruited to attend training sessions because of their experience and understanding. It is the perception of those who have reviewed training programs that arts and humanities chairs may be among the most reluctant to participate because of a fear they will be infected with a "managerial mentality." Some evidence suggests that the most competent persons are the ones most likely to participate in development activities (Garlock 1979). Compulsory attendance can be required at training sessions, of course, but that approach places a great burden on the training staff to constantly justify themselves.

What do participants learn? Most formal training programs focus on leadership, administration, and/or curriculum and instruction (Doersom 1980). They may emphasize interpersonal skills (Gilbert et al. 1977). The individual subjects may be very broad or specific, directed toward changing attitudes, or designed for learning new skills and problem solving. One evaluation reported that chairs learn many things not part of the formal curriculum at regional or state conferences (Waggaman 1982, Section V). Chairs reported that the three greatest insights coming from the workshops were ideas and solutions to problems from the specific topics covered (19 percent of total respondents), feeling better about oneself, that is, increased self-confidence in the role of chair (13 percent), and being able to adopt a modified approach to department problems (4 percent). Other and unexpected insights included the consideration of resigning or deciding to resign (3.1 percent), seeing the contrasts between policies of universities in the same system (1.6 percent), and learning that "my problems are not unique" (1.5 percent).

The workshops also had some informal benefits. The most frequently mentioned were: the opportunity for discussion with others from different institutions (26 percent), the opportunity to compare the policies and practices of others (6 percent), and the opportunity to build a group spirit among chairs and deans from the same university (6 percent). The importance of having people at the workshops from several different institutions was clearly apparent. This interaction led to the creation of some informal networks of chairs for problem solving, mutual support, and planning.

What did the chairs do with their new knowledge and skills after their training sessions? Participants from some programs might attempt to implement their new ideas, but other entire groups could lack sufficient motivation to do anything (Shtogren 1978). In Florida, 41 percent of the chairs described an important event or situation occurring after a workshop in which they were aided by information from it (Waggaman 1982). These situations fell into four groups: professional relations, leadership of the department, budget and financial matters, and miscellaneous. Of those respondents, a large percentage indicated they applied information gained at a workshop, and others, wrote they were able to identify and anticipate problems and prevent them because of what they had learned.

Were the reported training programs considered successful? Yes, in part.

> *The program produced desired results if the dean actively supported the idea of administrative training, let the chair know that training was important, and maintained frequent contact with the chair (Booth 1982, p. 30).*

One program was successful in terms of socialization and role (re)definition "and somewhat weak in terms of the specific skill development objective" (Plough 1979, p. 10). The chair and faculty need appropriate incentives if training is to be productive (Shtogren 1978, p. 193). The goal of the program in Florida was to introduce change in departmental administration and leadership (Waggaman 1982). In that respect, the program could be considered successful: 69 percent of the responding chairs attempted to implement some procedures like those read about and discussed at the workshops. When asked about the extent to which they were able to implement in their department the changes they said were necessary at the end of a workshop, 29 percent of the respondents claimed success, 50 percent were able to implement partial change, and 21 percent indicated failure.

Probably the most important consequence of the Florida program, especially for new chairs, was that the workshops made it possible for them to learn that they do not have to interpret departmental affairs personally and subjectively. Instead, when chairs recognize and understand the commonality of problems facing them, then they can treat departmental affairs objectively and apply various analytical frameworks and alternative solutions to them (Waggaman 1982, p. 52-53).

The need for better departmental administration during very difficult times has spurred the decision at many institutions that chairs need some kind of training. To be meaningful, a definition of training needs should rely upon a thorough understanding of the role of chairs and the ways in which training may teach problem-solving skills, reduce role conflict, and clarify expectations. These objectives can be at least partially achieved, given what we now know about programs already undertaken.

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